UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/715
16 September 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its presidential statement of 27 February 1997 (S/PRST/1997/8), the Security Council encouraged me to continue consultations with the Somali parties and regional States and organizations on the role the United Nations can play in supporting peace efforts, including on specific options contained in my report (S/1997/135). It also requested me to continue monitoring the situation in Somalia and to report to it in an appropriate manner on those consultations and on developments in the situation generally.

2. As members of the Council are aware, I asked Mr. Ismat Kittani to visit the region as my Special Envoy (a) to assess the situation on the ground; (b) to ascertain the positions of the Somali factions and the regional governments and organizations concerned on matters related to national reconciliation and the establishment of a broad-based government; (c) to assess the extent to which recent regional and other peacemaking initiatives had advanced the Somali political process; (d) to review and explore the role the United Nations might possibly play to support the regional peacemaking efforts, including the options discussed in my report to the Security Council; and (e) to make recommendations on any future peacemaking role of the United Nations.

3. The present report summarizes the results of Mr. Kittani's mission.

II. VISIT BY THE SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE REGION

4. My Special Envoy visited the region from 6 to 20 August 1997 and held consultations with all major Somali groups. On 14 August, in Addis Ababa, he met the delegation of the Sodere group, led by the Current Chairman of the National Salvation Council (NSC), Col. Abdullahi Yusuf, and two of its five Co-Chairmen, Mr. Ali Mahdi and General Gabio. On 15 August, he met Mr. Mohammad Sallah Nour, "Foreign Minister of Somaliland", in Djibouti. On 20 August, he met a nine-member delegation of the Aidid group in Nairobi, led by

Mr. Hilowle Iman Omar, one of the "Vice Presidents of the Transitional Government".

5. My Special Envoy also consulted with senior Government officials of regional States and the leaders of regional and international organizations engaged in efforts to help resolve the conflict in Somalia. On his way to the region, he conferred with Senator Rino Serri, Vice Foreign Minister of Italy, outside Rome on 6 August and Mr. Amre Moussa, Foreign Minister of Egypt, and his colleagues, as well as Mr. Abdel Meguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, outside Cairo on 8 August. He held consultations in Addis Ababa with Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister, and Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Foreign Minister, of Ethiopia as well as Mr. Kinfe Abraham, Acting Executive-Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), on 13 August, and with Mr. Salim Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), on 14 August. On 16 August, in Djibouti, he met Mr. Barkat Gourad Hamadou, Prime Minister, Mr. Mohamed Moussa Chehem, Foreign Minister and Mr. Ismail Omar Guellah, Chef de Cabinet, of Djibouti. On 17 August, in Sana'a, he held consultations with Mr. Ali Abdulla Saleh, President, and Mr. Abdul Karim Al-Iryani, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, of Yemen. In Nairobi, he met with Mr. Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, Foreign Minister of Kenya and General Lazarus Sumbeiywo, Adviser to President Moi, on 19 August, and with Mrs. Sally Kosgei, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 20 August.

6. In Nairobi, he received briefings from the head of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and the heads of United Nations agencies operating in Somalia, all of whose temporary offices are located in Nairobi. He was also briefed by representatives of the European Union and met the Acting Chairperson of the Somalia Aid Coordinating Body.

III. THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES

7. Thirteen United Nations agencies continue to provide emergency humanitarian relief assistance to Somalia in collaboration with approximately 50 international and 10 national non-governmental organizations. Humanitarian interventions comprise joint as well as individual United Nations programmes and projects, focusing on the four priority areas of emergency, rehabilitation, reconstruction and governance assistance requirements. These programmes have been designed to take into account the varying operational environments within the country.

8. In December 1996, United Nations agencies launched the 1996-1997 United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for Somalia, calling for $46.5 million for joint programmes in five major areas: emergencies, reintegration, rehabilitation, food security and governance. In addition, a further $54 million was requested by individual United Nations agencies for their own projects. In response to the appeal, a total of $20,532,484 had been contributed as at 14 July 1997, meeting 20.4 per cent of the appeal's revised requirements.

9. The overall humanitarian situation remains difficult. Somalia remains susceptible to three types of emergency situations requiring immediate international response: natural disasters, such as floods, droughts and pestilence; epidemics, particularly of cholera and also those affecting livestock; and man-made disasters, typically war-related casualties, population displacements and famine.

IV. POSITIONS OF THE MAIN SOMALI GROUPS

Sodere group

10. The Sodere group welcomed the visit of my Special Envoy and expressed appreciation for it as the manifestation of interest in the situation in Somalia. They gave my Special Envoy a memorandum expressing their views on Somalia's political process.

11. They said that they had made substantial efforts to contact Mr. Aidid and Mr. Egal, not necessarily to ask them to join the Sodere process, but to open dialogue with them for the sake of national reconciliation. Immediately after the NSC was formed, it assigned two of its Co-Chairmen, Mr. Ali Mahdi and Mr. Osman Atto, to hold a dialogue with Mr. Aidid, which subsequently contributed to the agreement reached in Mogadishu last January, as well as the Sana'a and the Cairo agreements. More recently, the NSC sent a delegation to Mogadishu in vain for a dialogue with Mr. Aidid on all issues.

12. The NSC, in spite of Mr. Aidid's refusal so far, pledged to seek his agreement to participate in the Bossaso Conference. The Sodere group/NSC hoped that he could be persuaded to engage in a dialogue. Regarding Mr. Egal, the NSC expressed the hope that it would be able to persuade him to participate in the Bossaso Conference.

13. Having set 1 November as the opening date for the Bossaso Conference, it stressed that the moment of truth had come for Somalia and that if Somalis had not been ready to put to good use the generous intervention of the international community earlier, they were now ready and determined to do so. From that standpoint, the NSC urged the international community not to turn its back on Somalia.

14. The NSC was grateful for the support of the IGAD countries, especially Ethiopia, for their efforts and for the endorsement by OAU of the IGAD position. It expressed the hope that the United Nations would support these regional organizations and the outcome of the Bossaso Conference. It called for the establishment of a United Nations trust fund to support the peace process as well as the reconstruction that would follow.

15. The NSC asserted that it represented the majority of Somalis and that only two groups, namely, part of the Habr Gedir and the Isaak clan, were not members. It expressed its readiness to make every effort to persuade these groups to participate in the national reconciliation process; however, it felt that no individual or group should have a veto over the national reconciliation process

which was under way and that one or two intransigent individuals, who refused to participate in the national reconciliation process, should be sanctioned.

16. The NSC confirmed its intention to proceed with the Bossaso Conference on 1 November, even without Mr. Aidid. At the same time, it expressed its willingness to meet with him at any time and place and its readiness to discuss the modalities for the national reconciliation conference, including the timing and venue, provided that these discussions were not used by Mr. Aidid for derailing the process.

17. Mr. Osman Atto said that he was solidly with the Sodere group; however, he had disagreements with some of its members in that he believed that rushing to hold the Bossaso Conference without adequate preparations, including securing the participation of all concerned, would be a mistake. In his view, a system of leadership based on a council rather than an individual would be the only way to address the problems of individual ambitions, and, prior to convening a national reconciliation conference, reconciliation in individual conflict areas, including Mogadishu, should take priority. He also wished as much United Nations involvement as possible.

The Aidid group

18. The nine-member delegation of the Aidid group gave my Special Envoy a message from him. It claimed that there was no region that was not represented in Mr. Aidid's "Transitional Government", that it controlled 11 out of the 18 regions of Somalia and that it enjoyed the confidence of the people of Somalia. When it further claimed that since the withdrawal of the United Nations Operation in Somalia II, stability and normal life had returned to Somalia under the "Transitional Government" and that now United Nations humanitarian activities enjoyed full security, my Special Envoy pointed out the recent murder of a Médecins sans frontières doctor in Baidoa and inquired about the progress in its investigation. The delegation asserted that it was an isolated event. Commenting on the Sodere process, the delegation insisted that a majority of the 26 factions and groups belonging to the Sodere group were either non-existent or headed by chairmen who had been replaced. It accused Ethiopia of invasion, military occupation, violation of the arms embargo and interference in Somalia's affairs and asserted that Ethiopia's policy was a cause of instability in Somalia. It wanted the United Nations to address these issues. It expressed the view that Somalia's problems should be left for the Somalis to resolve.

19. The delegation asserted that the "Transitional Government" was not against national reconciliation or a national reconciliation conference per se and that, in fact, it was involved in reconciliation efforts in Mogadishu and elsewhere. However, it expressed various objections to the Bossaso Conference: the lack of general consensus among the Somalis on such a conference; inadequate preparations; and the lack of a neutral facilitator. My Special Envoy conveyed to the delegation the readiness of the NSC to be flexible with respect to the modalities of a national reconciliation conference, including the timing and venue, and requested that this be transmitted to Mr. Aidid.

The Egal group

20. The "Foreign Minister of Somaliland" stated that the primary reason for his travel to Djibouti was to ask my Special Envoy to convey to me that "Somaliland" wished to have, and it felt deserving of, more substantial United Nations assistance to consolidate the fragile peace there, having achieved peace and tranquillity on its own. He gave my Special Envoy a message from his "President".

21. In response to my Special Envoy's inquiry about his position on the peace process, he said that "Somaliland" would be ready for discussion only after its "southern brothers" had resolved their differences. Regarding the Bossaso Conference, he had major reservations about the representative credentials of some of the faction leaders who would be among the participants. He was not prepared to give a clear answer as to whether "Somaliland" would be willing to send an observer. Nevertheless, he said that "Somaliland" was willing to do anything to assist its "southern brothers" to achieve peace and that if asked by IGAD, "Somaliland" would be willing to host the Bossaso Conference.

22. He expressed the view that the resolution of the Somali conflict should be left to IGAD in order to insulate Somalia from external intervention with "hidden agendas". He did not consider United Nations activities as such intervention.

V. VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE "EXTERNAL ACTORS"

23. Senator Serri felt that the combination of efforts by the Somalis and the "external actors" could maximize the chances of success.

24. The Foreign Minister of Egypt stressed the importance of supporting the efforts of IGAD, spearheaded by Ethiopia with the support of Kenya.

25. The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States briefed my Special Envoy on the League's recent contacts with both the Sodere group and the Aidid group in Cairo. He said that the League would welcome United Nations assistance for coordination.

26. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia felt that the political weight of the United Nations could make a difference. He said that with no government to ensure law and order, Somalia was becoming a major source of instability, with "extremists" and "terrorists" operating from there, the scope of which transcended the region. For this reason, he said, Ethiopia was convinced that any government, however weak, would be better than none, as it could at least give the neighbouring countries a framework for improving the situation. He expressed support for the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia.

27. The Acting Executive Secretary of IGAD said that IGAD and OAU were discussing the dispatch of a joint delegation to Somalia to persuade Mr. Aidid to talk to the Sodere group and also to persuade the Sodere group to be flexible.

28. The Secretary-General of OAU stressed that it was important for the United Nations to show increasing interest in the situation in Somalia and to have a greater presence, if not in Somalia itself, at least in the vicinity. He said that the national reconciliation conference should be supported. He briefed my Special Envoy on his most recent contacts with all the Somali groups, in which he had encouraged Mr. Aidid to talk with the others.

29. Mr. Salim informed my Special Envoy that OAU and IGAD were considering the possibility of dispatching a joint mission to Somalia, preferably prior to the national reconciliation conference, to convey the collective message of the continent. He also said that OAU supported the establishment of a United Nations trust fund for Somalia.

30. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Djibouti felt that peace in Somalia was of vital interest for Djibouti. IGAD would support the result of the Bossaso Conference and asked the international community to provide material support. They considered that the Sodere process and the Bossaso Conference were the only, and the most suitable, means to form a legitimate transitional authority, which would allow the people of Somalia to choose their leaders.

31. The President and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Yemen stressed that the situation in Somalia was of direct concern to Yemen, which had accepted many refugees. Yemen had offered to help hold the Bossaso Conference by assisting with providing security for the delegates.

32. The Foreign Minister of Kenya stressed the crucial importance of getting all factions on board. He felt that the location of the national reconciliation conference was open to discussion.

33. The consultations my Special Envoy held with the countries and organizations assisting in the peacemaking process, indicate that they share the belief that the Aidid group needs to be persuaded to join the peace process and that there is consensus among them that the United Nations could help coordinate their efforts so that the international community could be seen as speaking with one voice to the Somali groups, thus maximizing the chances of success in the peace process.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

34. Developments since the Nairobi understanding and the Sodere declarations, namely, the agreement reached in Mogadishu and the Sana'a and Cairo agreements, have given rise to hope that the Somali parties may have finally arrived at a stage where they will engage in serious consultations for peace.

35. My Special Envoy's mission has shown that the political process in Somalia is at another critical juncture. Having set 1 November 1997 as the opening date for the national reconciliation conference, the Sodere group made clear its intention to proceed with that conference, even if efforts by the Sodere group and the "external actors" fail to persuade Mr. Aidid to demonstrate readiness to engage in a serious dialogue with the Sodere group on issues concerning national reconciliation. There appears to be a substantial amount of sympathy for this

position in the region. Meanwhile, the Sodere group and all the "external actors" have pledged to do all they can to persuade Mr. Aidid not to reject the national reconciliation process.

36. I have directed that the following steps be taken as a matter of priority in line with recommendations made by my Special Envoy:

(a) A meeting at the ambassadorial level will be convened at Headquarters in September 1997, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs, with the participation of representatives of all the countries my Special Envoy visited (Italy, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and Yemen), together with those of IGAD, OAU, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Interested members of the Security Council will be invited to participate. The purpose of this meeting would be to harmonize views on mechanisms and measures to maximize the international community's efforts to help Somalia achieve national reconciliation. These might include joint missions to convey agreed messages to all Somali factions. The meeting could also discuss such proposals as a trust fund for Somalia and other measures to strengthen the United Nations supporting and coordinating role. The meeting could also develop into periodically held consultations at the ambassadorial level for the purpose of harmonizing the efforts of the international community for Somalia;

(b) In view of the contacts my Special Envoy had in the region, I have reviewed the role of UNPOS, which currently consists of a Director, one Professional assistant, and one secretary, and have concluded that its continuation and strengthening are essential in order to enable us to continue to extend assistance to those engaged in peacemaking efforts for Somalia. I have also accepted the conclusion of my Special Envoy that the personnel of UNPOS should undertake more visits to Somalia on a regular basis, security conditions permitting. I have therefore decided to add another Professional staff member to the Office. Unfortunately, with Mogadishu at phase V security status, it is still not possible to move UNPOS to Mogadishu at the present time. However, I shall keep the question of its relocation to Somalia under review. For planning and budgetary purposes, it is envisaged that UNPOS will continue to exist during the biennium 1998-1999. The necessary financial resources would need to be authorized and allocated;

(c) Every effort will continue to be made to help the Somali people in the relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development fields, as circumstances permit;

(d) A general review of the role of the United Nations in Somalia will be conducted in November/December 1997 in the light of the results of the national reconciliation conference, if held, or of the situation that obtains if it is not.